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C O N F I D E N T I A L YEREVAN 000489

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR DRL, EUR/CARC

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [KDEM](#) [KJUS](#) [AM](#)
SUBJECT: DIRECT SOURCE CONFIRMS SYUNIK GOVERNOR'S ASSAULT
ON TEENAGER

REF: YEREVAN 414

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Joseph Pennington, reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) A direct source recently approached the Embassy confidentially to confirm the credibility of reports that Syunik Governor Suren Khachatrian in late April viciously assaulted a 16-year-old teenager in his office, in retaliation for the latter's alleged beating of his son (reftel). Artashes Torozian (protect), the chairman of the Goris Teachers' Union (GTU) non-governmental organization, told Emboffs that the teenager was the son of one of the board members of their NGO. (Note: Goris is the second largest city in the Syunik region. End note.)

¶2. (C) According to Torozian, the governor called the teenager to his office after he had scuffled with his son. The scuffle broke out when the teenager tried to stop the governor's son's untoward advances toward a girl on the street. The governor allegedly reproached the teenager for daring to raise a hand on his son, and when the teenager showed no regret or remorse, the governor hit him. The blow caused excessive nose bleeding and the governor then tried to give the boy a napkin to stop the bleeding, which the boy pushed away. Enraged by the teenager's impudence, he then viciously beat him.

¶3. (C) Following the assault, the teenager's family had to drive four hours from Goris to Yerevan in order to reach first aid, since the governor allegedly prohibited any of the nearby hospitals from treating the teenager. The boy was discharged from the hospital after several days, and according to the source, has become very depressed and lost significant weight as a result of the incident. The teenager's family is too intimidated by the governor to lodge a complaint, but the source says the entire city of Goris knows what transpired. (Note and comment: The teenager's mother is a teacher who works for an advocacy NGO that is a core grantee of USAID's implementer Counterpart/Civic Advocacy Supporting Program. The fact that such a person has so far declined to go public with the attack, or lodge a complaint, shows just how vulnerable the victimized family feels in the present situation. End note and comment.)

¶4. (SBU) As reftel pointed out, the Prime Minister ordered his deputy to launch an investigation into the news reports surrounding the alleged assault. The investigation was closed in early May, finding that the beating had not/not occurred.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) Armenia has long had problems with brutality and

mistreatment by law enforcement officers, which has been "tactfully" tolerated by elected or appointed officials who either ignore or cover up the phenomenon. That high officials of the state -- a governor in this case -- engage in the same practice, and get away with it, is downright appalling. It is not surprising that average Armenians place little trust in law enforcement bodies here, and even less in their elected or appointed officials. We intend to raise the handling of this case during the coming visit of A/S Kramer. End comment.
PENNINGTON